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CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   A method of monitoring supply chain activity of a plurality of supply chain sites, comprising:

extracting, at each supply chain site, supply-related data to be monitored, wherein the data is maintained in plural formats at the supply chain sites;

translating the data to a common format;

uploading and collecting, from each supply chain site, the extracted data to a data collection site; and

upon a user request,

formatting, at the data collection site, a portion of the collected data into one of a plurality of views, responsive to criteria selected by the user, for presentation to the user, the portion of formatted data being dependent on access rights granted to the user's supply chain site, and
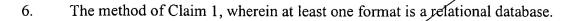
publishing the formatted data view to the user's supply chain site.

2.   The method of Claim 1 wherein the data is translated at each supply chain site before uploading.

3.   The method of Claim 1 wherein the data is translated at the data collection site after uploading.

4.   The method of Claim 1, further comprising, at each supply chain site:

scanning for new or changed data at regular intervals; and

uploading upon finding new or changed data.

5.   The method of Claim 1, wherein at least one format is a spreadsheet.

6.   The method of Claim 1, wherein at least one format is a relational database.

7.   The method of Claim 1, wherein at least one format is a text file.

8.   The method of Claim 1 wherein at least two formats at one or more supply chain sites are different.

5   9.   The method of Claim 1 wherein data comprises inventory data.

10.   The method of Claim 1 wherein data comprises purchase orders.

11.   The method of Claim 1 wherein data stored at the supply chain sites is stored in legacy databases.

12.   The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

    at the data collection site, monitoring inbound data from multiple supply chain sites;

    detecting a problem condition; and

    asserting an alert.

13.   The method of Claim 12 wherein raising an alert comprises highlighting an

15   Alert indicator on a user screen.

14.   The method of Claim 13 further comprising, upon selection of the highlighted Alert indicator by a user:

    displaying details of the detected problem condition.

15.   The method of Claim 14 wherein the details of the detected problem condition

20   are displayed in a graphical format.

16.   The method of Claim 1 further comprising:

        using animation to present the data to a user.

17.   The method of Claim 1, wherein supply chain sites include any or all of contract managers (CMs), vendors, distributors and an original equipment manufacturer (OEM).

18.   The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

        encrypting the data before uploading.

19.   The method of Claim 1 wherein uploading is over the Internet.

20.   The method of Claim 1 further comprising:

        providing, to the data collection site, materials requirements information for a product at any or all stages in the product's lifecycle.

21.   The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

        generating an analysis report responsive to report selection by a user; and

        providing the generated report responsive to user selection of report destinations.

22.   The method of Claim 21, wherein providing the generated report comprises at least one of emailing, printing, storing as a file or displaying on a monitor or a screen, the report.

23.   A system for monitoring supply chain activity comprising a plurality of supply chain sites, comprising:

        a data collection center, comprising

                a data collector, and

a publisher for publishing data from the data collector upon request; and

a plurality of supply chain sites, each supply chain site comprising

a data storage device for maintaining supply-chain data,

a data transfer engine (DTE), for transferring the supply-chain data to the data collection center,

input means for allowing a user to query the data collector, and

a display for displaying data published by the publisher in response to a query.

24. The system of Claim 23, wherein the data collector is a database.

25. The system of Claim 23, wherein data stored at a supply chain site is stored in at least one of a database, a spreadsheet, and a text file.

26. The system of Claim 23 wherein the DTE comprises encryption means for encrypting the data before transferring.

27. The system of Claim 23 wherein data is displayed in a window on the display at a site according to a category selected by a user at the site, responsive to authorization granted to the site.

28. The system of Claim 27 further comprising, for each category, at least one analysis filter selectable by the user for setting criteria to be used in filtering the data to be displayed.

29. The system of Claim 28 wherein filtering comprises sorting.

30. The system of Claim 28 wherein filters are organized hierarchically.

31.   The system of Claim 27, further comprising, in each window, an alert indicator for indicating existence of an alert condition.

32.   The system of Claim 31, wherein the alert turns red to indicate the existence of an alert condition.

5   33.   The system of Claim 31, where an alert condition indicates a shortage.

34.   The system of Claim 31, where an alert condition indicates a surplus.

35.   The system of Claim 31 wherein alert conditions are represented in graphical form.

36.   The system of Claim 35 wherein alarm conditions and lead times are color-
10   coded.

37.   The system of Claim 35 wherein when the user clicks in the graphical representation, detailed information about the alert is displayed.

38.   A computer program product for monitoring a supply chain, the computer program product comprising a computer usable medium having computer readable code thereon, including program code which:

       receives, at a data collection site, supply-related data extracted from at least one supply chain site, wherein the data is maintained in plural formats;

       stores, at the data collection sites, the received data in a common format; and

20   upon a user request, the user being located at a supply chain site,

                formats a portion of the collected data into one of a plurality of views, responsive to criteria selected by the user, for presentation to the user, the

portion of formatted data being dependent on access rights granted to the user, and

publishes the formatted data view to the user.

39. The computer program product of Claim 38, which additionally translates the data to a common format.

40. The computer program product of Claim 38, wherein the data is translated to a common format at the supply chain site.

41. A computer system comprising:

a processor located at a data collection site;

a memory system connected to the processor; and

a computer program, in the memory, which:

receives supply-related data extracted from at least one supply chain site, wherein the data is maintained in plural formats; and

upon a user request, the user being located at a supply chain site,

formats a portion of the collected data into one of a plurality of views, responsive to criteria selected by the user, for presentation to the user, the portion of formatted data being dependent on access rights granted to the user, and

publishes the formatted data view to the user.

42. A computer data signal embodied in a carrier wave for allowing users to monitor a supply chain, comprising:

program code for receiving, at a data collector site, supply-related data extracted from a plurality of supply chain sites, wherein the data is maintained at the supply chain sites in plural formats;

program code for storing the received data in a common format, at the data collection site;

program code for formatting, at the data collection site, and upon a user request, the user being located at a supply chain site, a portion of the collected

5   data into one of a plurality of views, responsive to criteria selected by the user, for presentation to the user, the portion of formatted data being dependent on access rights granted to the user; and

program code for publishing the formatted data view to the user.

43.   A system for monitoring supply chain activity comprising a plurality of supply

10   chain sites, comprising:

means for extracting, at each supply chain site, supply-related data to be monitored, wherein the data is maintained in plural formats located among the supply chain sites;

means for translating the data to a common format;

15   means for uploading and collecting, from each supply chain site, the extracted data to a data collection site;

means for formatting, at the data collection site, a portion of the collected data into one of a plurality of views, responsive to criteria selected by the user, for presentation to the user, the portion of formatted data being dependent on

20   access rights granted to the user's supply chain site, and

means for publishing the formatted data view to the user's supply chain site.